SAUGUS SPEEDWAY OPENS 50TH YEAR OF AUTO RACING

The 1989 racing season opened Saturday night at Saugus Speedway with over 100 cars competing in NASCAR sportsman, street stock, hobby stock and jalopy divisions. The evening opened with the traditional showcase of pretty cars which included fireworks heralding the arrival of the 50th year of auto racing at the facility. Awards for prettist cars went to Craig Rayburn in sportsman, Rick Crow in street stock, Thad Friday in hobby stock and Rick Bonifield in jalopy. Five feature races concluded the gala event. Gary Ebeling triumphed in Sportsman action, John Kirby was declared the victor in street stocks, Jim Grulkey won the stocker figure 8, Shannon Flavin prevailed in the Hobby stock oval and Scott Wade took the hobby figure 8.

Ebeling led the 40-lap sportsman main event wire-to-wire in the NASCAR sportsman debut for the former mini-stock champion. Ebeling set on the pole for the race and moved into the lead at the start with Gary Sigman following. Sigman would shadow Ebeling throughout the race but was destined to finish second. Three-time and defending sportsman champion Dave Phipps ran in third early before he and Bobby Oliver tangled on lap nine sending Oliver spinning. For the incident, Phipps was sent to the rear and would end up thirteenth at the finish. Shortly thereafter, Will Harper and fast qualifier John Watkinson took over in third and fourth and maintained those position to the finish. Rusty Parr rounded out the top five at the finish.

Larry Durm led the 25-lap street stock oval main from the pole for the first eight laps before Eric Foster gained the top spot for just three circuits. Taking over the lead on lap twelve was Kenny Wilson. Wilson maintained the lead as Rayburn moved to second with Russ Beckers third and Kirby fourth by lap 20. With just three laps to go Rayburn and Beckers were battling for second down the front stretch went Rayburn turned the car of Beckers into the wall. The yellow flag came out with 23 laps complete. Under the yellow Rayburn was black flagged and forced to retire to the pits. Kirby moved up into second and would apparently finish there as Wilson led the final two laps and crossed the finish line as the winner. However, post race inspections found an illegal carbuerator on Wilson's car and was therefore disqualified giving the win to Kirby. Rick Winakur ended up second ahead of John Cran, Steve Nickolai and Tom Kimmel.

The 15-lap street stock figure 8 main event was also led wire-to-wire by Grulkey who maintained a small lead throughout the race on his way to victory. A last lap scramble for positions saw Beckers fall from second to fourth as both Nickolai and Rayburn passed him to finish in second and third. Kirby ended up fifth.

Both hobby stock main events feature duels between Flavin and Wade. The the first event, the 25-lap oval main, Wade took over the lead on lap ten and started pulling away before Flavin moved to second position and started to close on Wade. With the assistance of a yellow flag on lap fifteen, Flavin caught and passed Wade for the lead on lap 18 and lead the rest of the way to the checkered flag. Behind Wade in second at the finish were Brian Kelley, Larry Leis and Dale Condelli. Andrew Debiasio's fourteenth place finish was the best performance among the jalopy division.

The 15-lap hobby stock figure 8 main event started out the same as the oval in that Wade moved into the lead with Flavin moving into second afterwards. However, this time Flavin was not able to run down Wade as Wade maintained his lead to the finish. Kelley ended up second just beating Flavin who was third. Friday was fourth with Doug Renno fifth.